

Classical Geopolitics and Cartography

Bertil Haggman

Return of Geopolitics and Atlases

The German geographer Friedrich Ratzel in his book *Politische Geographie* (1897) developed a number of basic concepts concerning among other things space, which inspired both Rudolf Kjellén, a Swedish professor of geography and political science, who first used the term geopolitics (geopolitik in Swedish) and Sir Halford Mackinder of Great Britain. The latter's central term was Heartland, more or less Russia (or later the Soviet Union). Mackinder predicted that the state in this age would become a threat to the naval powers, Great Britain and the United States. Mackinder in his analysis included a number of factors such as communications, populations and industrialization.

The American Admiral Alfred T. Mahan was a geopolitician before the term was created (his books were published just before the turn of the century). Mahan's thesis was broadly that the seapowers could maintain hegemony by establishing a number of bases around the Eurasian landmass.

The American Professor Nicholas J. Spykman further developed the ideas of Mackinder and in the 1930s believed that only an Anglo-American alliance with the Soviet Union could prevent German world domination. Also it was more important to dominate the rim areas of Eurasia than the Heartland. Spykman died during the Second World War but his thinking has had continuing influence in the United States until the twenty first century.

According to classical geopolitics the main base for global power politics is land power against sea power. This contradiction will continue to play a role in global politics. China is emerging as a new great power (at the present but later maybe a global power). This was predicted in the beginning of the twentieth century by Kjellén.

A number of strategic atlases were published during the Cold War but it was France that was to be a pioneer in the field of geopolitical cartography in the 1980s. Geopolitics has been relatively important in France and French cartography has to some extent been important.

Geopolitics, Civilizations and Geopolitics

Combining cartography with study of civilizations, history and geopolitics has an important future in various fields. An example in the 1990s was the change from hard-copy to software in the historical-political atlas field as early as 1993.

Clockwork Software of Chicago then presented *Millenium*, an historical atlas of Europe and the Middle East from 1000 AD to the present. Atlases of all kinds can now be produced, put on CDs or downloaded to be stored on computers and on USBs. Each map can then be sought out and printed separately in color. *Centennia* is another example. It is a map-based guide to

the history of Europe and the Middle East from the beginning of the 11th century to the present. Dynamic, animated it seemed to be the follow-up of *Millenium*. This software product of Centennia Software in the United States was according to the publisher used by the National War College.

Long after the Second World War publishers avoided geopolitical atlases. The existence of German Geopolitik during the war years and the propagandistic character of the geopolitical maps might be the reason. But since the twentieth century there has always been a dominating alternative: American-British geopolitics, a subject related to political geography.

A number of strategic atlases were published during the Cold War. One of the most important was the one by British Professor of Geopolitics Ewan Anderson, *An Atlas of World Political Flashpoints - A Sourcebook of Geopolitical Crisis* (Pinter Reference, London, 1993). Anderson is Emeritus Professor of Geopolitics, University of Durham, in the United Kingdom. He is also author of the ultimate geopolitical cartographic work, *International Boundaries: A Geopolitical Atlas* (2002), with almost 1,000 pages.

One example of Anderson's "flashpoints" is Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. In the field of geopolitics and geostrategy, islands are important geographic features. Their location at sea and isolation from the continental landmasses often provide good positions for attack, surveillance, support and special activities of different kinds.

Examples of such islands are Diego Garcia (UK/USA), Lampedusa, south of Italy, and various islands and island groups in the Pacific. The South China Sea islands, for example, have been occupied by China without much opposition from the West.

France's Southern Indian Ocean Maritime Zone, Australian islands in the South Pacific, India's islands in the Indian Ocean, the Nicobar and Andaman Islands are also of strategic importance.

For the United Kingdom the Falkland Islands are vital for forward security in the South Atlantic Ocean.

In a Russian attack on Sweden the Aland Islands in the Baltic Sea close to Stockholm would be attractive targets as well as the Island of Gotland (Swedish territory). This island is presently more and less undefended by Swedish Armed Forces.

In the case of the British territory of Diego Garcia, location and political reliability is everything. The United States faces a growing contradiction in some of the world's most strategically vital areas. The number of land-based US forces in the Middle East and South Asia is expected to shrink over time, even as counterinsurgency activities there remain a long-term priority (here I am using arguments presented in "Diego Garcia and the United States' Emerging Indian Ocean Strategy", *Journal Asian Security* in vol. 6, no. 3, 2010).

The security situation in the Indian Ocean region, long characterized by uncertain relations between its major power brokers, is prone to strategic miscalculation. More than ever before,

the interests of the United States, India, and China all coincide and collide in the Indian Ocean littoral. These key states, one predominant and the others ascendant, may find themselves at odds as they protect national interests in a region with great potential and numerous challenges, including:

- volatile and fragile states, which are often beset by, and sometimes facilitate, irregular threats, irredentist powers, sectarian divides, and religious tensions;
- a rich flow of resources through constrained and vulnerable shipping lanes;
- often skittish host nations; and
- newly capable actors possibly seeking to undermine others' influence by sustained projection of power.

Diego Garcia offers politically unconstrained access near the Middle East.

British Professor Jeremy Black in 2016 published *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance* (Indiana University Press).

Black is not a geopolitician but as historian he is arguing that history and geography delineate the operation of power. Geopolitics is not only a matter of spatial dimensions but also about ideas and perception.

In Black's view Henry Kissinger, Francis Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington, Philip Bobbitt, Niall Ferguson and others could be regarded as geopolitical thinkers, which is of course not the case. The late professor Huntington is rather a civilizationist in the vein of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. Huntington deals mainly with competing civilizations and not the Heartland and continents, sea power and land power and not geopolitics.

In the twentyfirst century many international politicians seem to argue that our world is all about technology, globalization and the spread of liberal democracy. In reality it is the seas, the continents, rivers and other geographical features that determine world power and order.

Black in his book argues that with geographical aspects cultural factors should be taken into account when considering for instance Islamist terrorism and China's policy in the East and South China Seas. Other aspects to be taken into account are population growth, resources, climate change and pandemics when viewing geopolitical trends. Of main importance is however the state, which is still and will be a dominant actor.

The book holds forth Sir Halford Mackinder's geopolitical analysis from the beginning of the twentieth century as relevant to contemporary and future geopolitical analysis.

It should be remembered that for success the grand strategy of the West should be to prevent that any one state or coalition of states dominates the Eurasian landmass. This can best be

achieved by being observant the Rimland of Eurasia from Europe in the west to the coast of northern East Asia. Here the Middle East is playing an important role.

A positive aspect of Blacks book on geopolitics is that he regards “critical geopolitics” as a feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial worldview that seeks to promote fraudulent and deceptive answers to present international problems to unwitting readers.

Geopolitical Atlases

A number of geopolitical atlases were published mainly from the 1980s to the present. *Strategic Atlas - A Comparative Geopolitics of the World's Powers* (Perennial Library, 1990, Harper & Row Publishers, New York) was one of them highly lauded in reviews.

The Center for Research on Geopolitics, Sweden, is presently working on a project to produce a digital geopolitical atlas. The revival of geopolitics in the twenty-first century has demonstrated the importance of the geopolitical map and the geopolitical atlas. It is especially important to cover Eurasia (the heartland of Mackinder; Russia and Central Asia) and the rimland of Spykman with China and Iran/Persia, in future geopolitical atlases. Both Russia, China and Iran/Persia are old challengers to Western civilization. The working title of the forthcoming atlas is “Atlas of Classical Geopolitics and Geostrategy”. Some of the main subjects covered will be map projections, classical geopoliticians, the Middle East and the Far East.

There are several possibilities when considering the choice of method when publishing a digital geopolitical atlas. The author of this paper is not a cartographer but from the standpoint of a layman there are a couple of choices. One could use an internet-based webpage. An alternative is an app. Also the publisher could publis the atlas as an e-book or on a USB.

Rudolf Kjellén and Geopolitics of Today

Rudolf Kjellén (1864 – 1922), the Swedish geographer published his works in Swedish, which made him less accessible to those who were not familiar with the Swedish language. This denied large parts of academia the acquaintance with and examination of his work. Some of his books were translated into German, but there has so far been little interest in him in the Anglo-Saxon world. Kjellén never used maps in his publications.

One of his classical geopolitical works, *The Great Powers* (Stormakterna), appeared in a first edition 1905 in Sweden. It had over 20 editions in Germany.

Today he is probably best known in South America, where classical geopolitics has remained strong (see Phillip Kelly, *Checkerboards & Shatterbelts – The Geopolitics of South America*, Austin: University of Texas Press 1997).

In 1902 Kjellén had been appointed professor of political science and statistics at the University of Gothenburg.

Kjellén was interested in Japan and its rise in the Far East. In his view Japan and China, once free of Western control, would be great powers of the future. Their rise would come as the European powers declined. He was also critical of colonialism and racism.

In 1909 he traveled to Japan and China, a journey that would have significant influence on his geopolitical research. On this trip around the world he travelled first by train through Siberia and arrived in Beijing in April 1909. After 12 days in the Chinese capital he concluded in his diary that the days of European power were coming to an end. The powers, in his view, acted with hubris and arrogance.

On steamer he continued to Japan and made his base in Yokohama. There he was invited to stay in the home of the Swedish diplomat Gustaf Oskar Wallenberg (1863 – 1937).

For more on Kjellén and Japan see Bert Edström's "Rudolf Kjellén och Japan", journal *Orientaliska studier*, No. 89, 1996, pp. 12 – 35 and *Storsvensken i Yttersta Östern – G.O. Wallenberg som svenskt sändebud i Japan, 1906 – 1918*, Working Paper 52, August 1999, Center for Pacific Asia Studies, University of Stockholm.

In June he sailed on the "Empress of India" across the Pacific Ocean to Vancouver. From there he crossed Canada on the Canadian Pacific Railway to board an Atlantic liner for Europe and Sweden. On July 13 he was back in Gothenburg after a four month tour.

In the fall of 1916 Kjellén wrote the introduction to a work that would give him international fame, "The State as a Life-Form". The book was a bestseller in its Japanese edition.

After the Great War he saw Great Britain and Russia grow into "planetarian" powers or superpowers in today's terminology. The United States is today a hegemon far more powerful than the United Kingdom. Already in 1919, he predicted a development towards superpower influence in the world. These views were based on the future strength of geographically and demographically large countries. In fact his predictions were proven correct. During the Cold War, for instance, the United States and the Soviet Union were the geographically large and dominating superpowers. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 China and India, for example, have risen to become great powers, both having large populations.

Finally Kjellén focused on the question of the "historical side" of a state and movements that can occur. The "historical side" of Russia has for instance been the movement from the Baltic Sea-the Barents Sea to the Black Sea-the Mediterranean and then (1878) to the Far East and after 1905 mainly southward. An important aspect of this is also the pattern of movement of capital cities: in Russia Moscow to St. Petersburg and back to Moscow and in Turkey from Istanbul to Ankara.

Geopolitics, both as Kjellén viewed it and in its main Western stream, (Mackinder, Mahan, Spykman et al) is a science between history, geography and political science but it can also be regarded as an aid to all three.

Kjellén correctly predicted the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, the gradual decline of France as a great power and the decay of the British Empire.

These predictions were based on the view that the European great powers were influenced by hubris of superiority, which would lead to resistance and liberation in the colonial world. Kjellén also believed Islam would be a rising threat in global politics due to the weakening of European great powers.

He also correctly predicted the coming of World War I already in 1899. In that he was not of course alone. Kjellén based the forecast on the growing antagonism of on one side of Great Britain and France. On the other side was Germany and Austria.

In conclusion it is possible that Kjellen would today have viewed Russia, China and Iran (Persia) as the foremost challengers to the United States, Great Britain and Japan. The Swedish geopolitician could in the 21st century be a valuable tool for grand strategists, geopoliticians and geostrategists.

Conclusion

It will be interesting to observe the development of electronic, GIS-based cartography in the first decade of the twentyfirst century. In the 1990s Microsoft showed interest in geopolitical issues and one can only hope that it leads to the creation of an electronic geopolitical atlas by some software company. With continuing globalization there is a growing need for a geopolitical issue related atlas in English (both electronic and hard-copy). Professor Anderson has demonstrated how it can be done. A drawback in *An Atlas of World Political Flashpoints* is that the maps are in black/white only.

Developments have shown that issues that need to be covered are the Middle East in general, geopolitics of international terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir, disputed border areas, maybe the Taiwan Strait, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the Israel-Lebanon border area to mention only a few. Electronic geopolitical atlases have the advantage that changes can be made rather quickly while hard-copy atlases must wait years for new editions.

Appendices

On the Center for Research on Geopolitics (CRG) and Its Director 1988 - 2017

A private initiative, the center was founded in 1988 to study the history and present practice of geopolitical ideas and be one Swedish contribution to the analysis of global trends in

international politics. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 there has been a marked trend toward interest in geopolitical analysis of grand strategy. During the 1990s a growing number of books on geopolitics have been published and conferences taken place focusing on geopolitical analysis.

CRG irregularly publishes research papers and reports in three series.

The papers and reports have been reviewed in Geographical Abstracts/Human Geography (Elsevier/Geo Abstracts).

An important recent activity of the director is participation in the analysis of the geopolitics of communication in Europe and elsewhere. The work is based on the assumption that Berlin after 1991 could be an important future hub for communication.

In 2009 Haggman published the work *Geopolitik – en introduktion* (Recito Forlag AB, Sweden, 140 pages).

CRG promotes the use of digital cartography and GIS in geopolitical research in the belief that the geopolitical atlas is reemerging as an important instrument of research in this field.

Geopolitical Atlases and other Map Books – A Selected Bibliography

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Freedman, Lawrence, *Atlas of Global Strategy – War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, London: Equinox (Oxford) Ltd, 1985, reprint 1987

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Outlining Geographical Expanse with a Brush – Historical Maps in the Collection of the National Palace Museum. Taiwan: National Palace Museum, 1997.

From "Geographical Abstracts: Human Geography", Elsevier Science Ltd, Norwich, England

"The return of Chinese imperialism – a geopolitical forecast" by B. Haggman (1995) – Research paper.

An outwardly and expansionist China might be aided by large Muslim countries to obtain a new and strong geopolitical influence in the world. The paper traces the historical background of China's imperialist tradition backed up with xenophobia and a feeling of cultural superiority to all others. Economic forecasts that within a generation China will be the world's biggest economy, a growing military power and a nation with expansionist ambitions leads the author to conclude that the world should 'look out for China'.

C.Mailey

"Russia, Eurasia and Geopolitics" by B.Haggman (1993) – Research paper.

This research paper explores how various Russian and later Soviet writers in the 19th and 20th century have conceived the relationship between Russia and Asia. Within that analysis, two major themes are drawn out: first Russian "fascination" with Asia on the basis of previous encounters with groups such as the Mongols. Second, Russian "dreams" of a "Greater Russia" which would challenge the West and 'save' the East. The implications are that Russia should strive to create a Euro-Asian empire. Later the author explores how

geopolitical thought has shaped those writings on Euro Asia. He concludes by noting that the collapse of the Soviet Union has cast doubts on those dreams of a Euro-Asian bloc.

K.J. Dodds

"Geopolitics in India" by B.Haggman (1994) – Research paper.

Indian geopolitical thinking has been highly influenced by the writings of Swedish professor Rudolf Kjellén between 1890 and 1922. Current Indian geopolitical thinking which is often connected with international relations and Indian studies is led by Prof. M. M.Puri who has placed special emphasis on the geopolitical importance of the Indian Ocean. The paper concludes with an examination of the objectives of Indian geopolitical societies which are seeking to instill and enhance geopolitical awareness.

C.Mailey

